


# THE LEARNED PANDIT

and other tales told by Ramakrishna

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

MULICK



Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa needs no introduction. Of him Mahatma Gandhi has said, "The life of Sri Ramakrishna is a life of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face."

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings were as simple as his life and were often illustrated with stories. He stirs our hearts with his tales about faith even as he makes us laugh gently at the weaknesses and follies of men.



 November 1, 1981

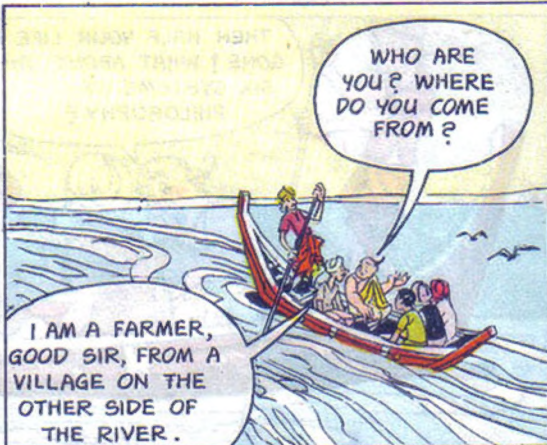
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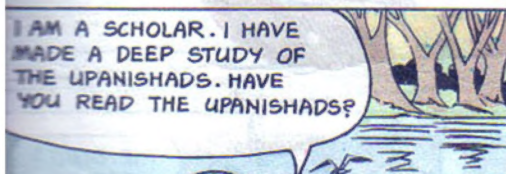
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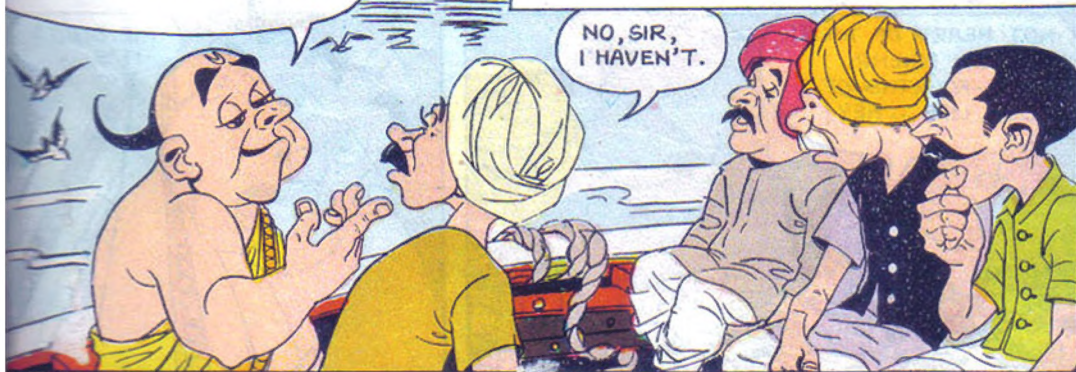
# THE LEARNED PANDIT

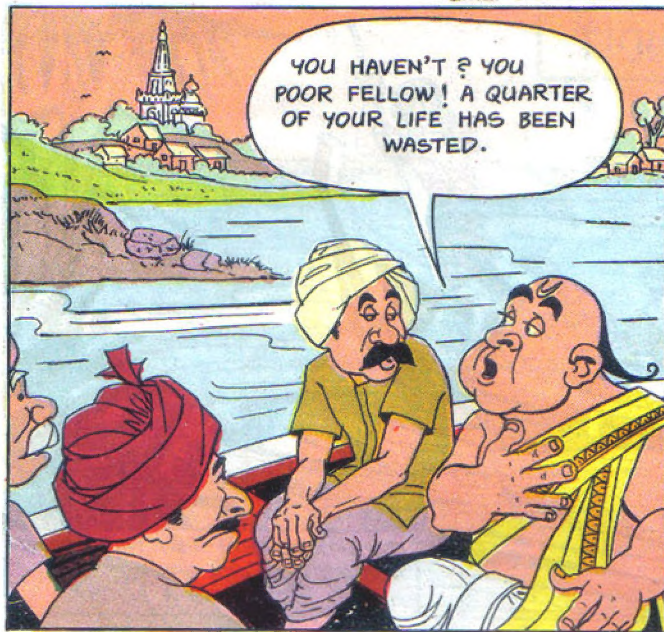
ONE DAY, SEVERAL MEN WERE BEING FERRIED ACROSS A RIVER. AMONG THEM WAS A PANDIT.

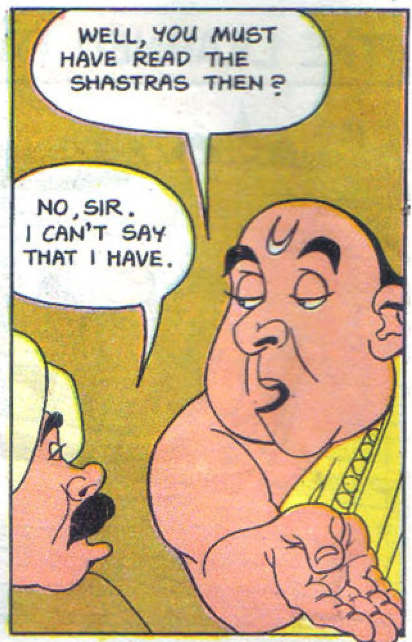


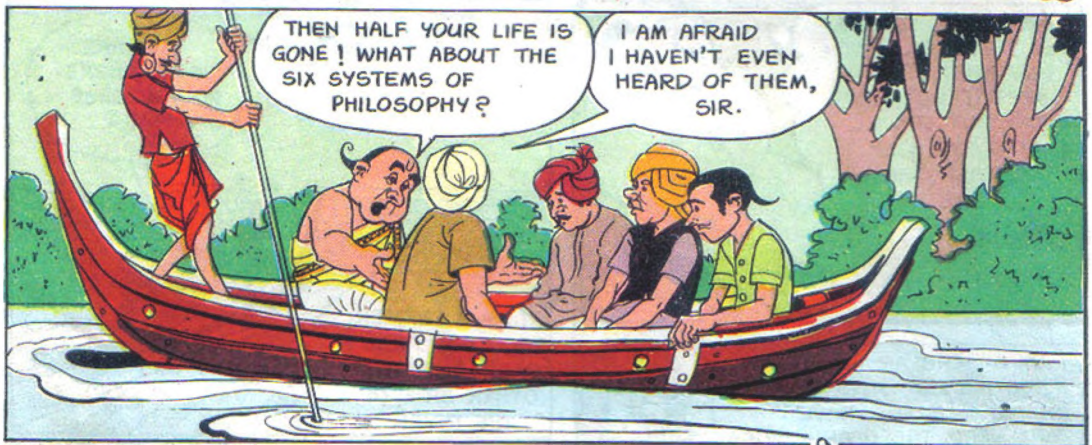



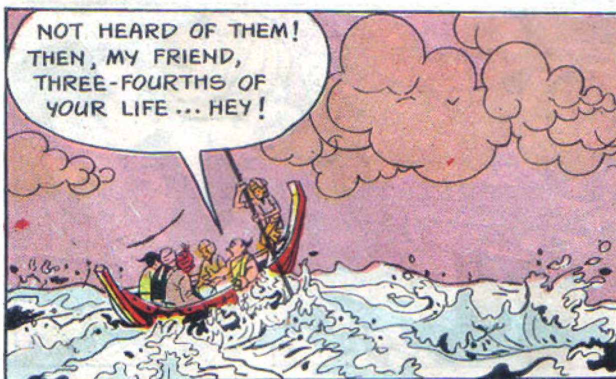



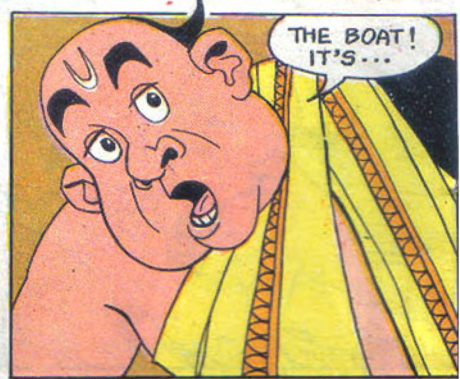




YOU HAVEN'T ? YOU POOR FELLOW ! A QUARTER OF YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN WASTED.

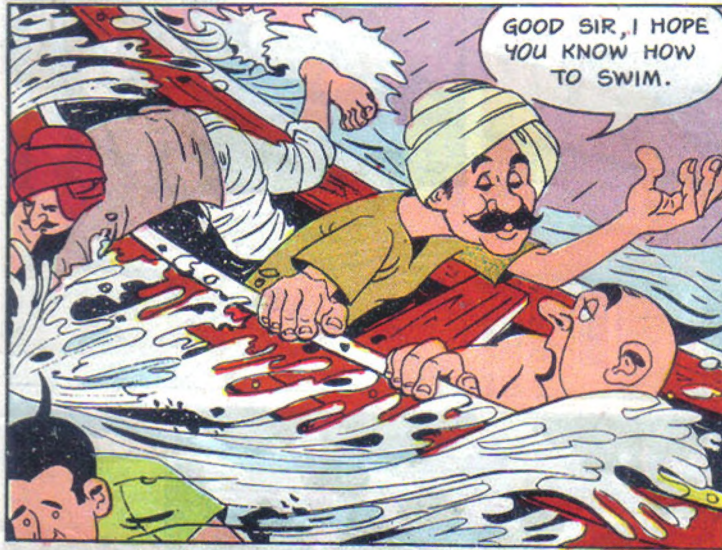

WELL, YOU MUST HAVE READ THE SHASTRAS THEN ?
NO, SIR. I CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE.

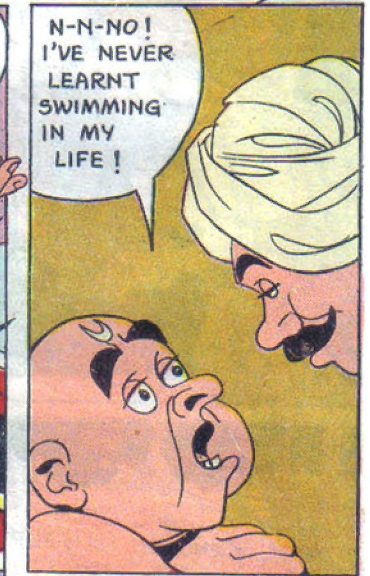

THEN HALF YOUR LIFE IS GONE ! WHAT ABOUT THE SIX SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY ?
I AM AFRAID I HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD OF THEM, SIR.

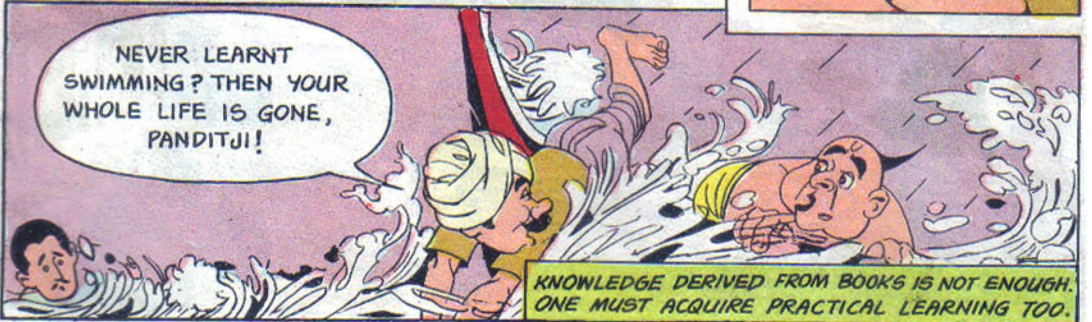

NOT HEARD OF THEM! THEN, MY FRIEND, THREE-FOURTHS OF YOUR LIFE ... HEY!

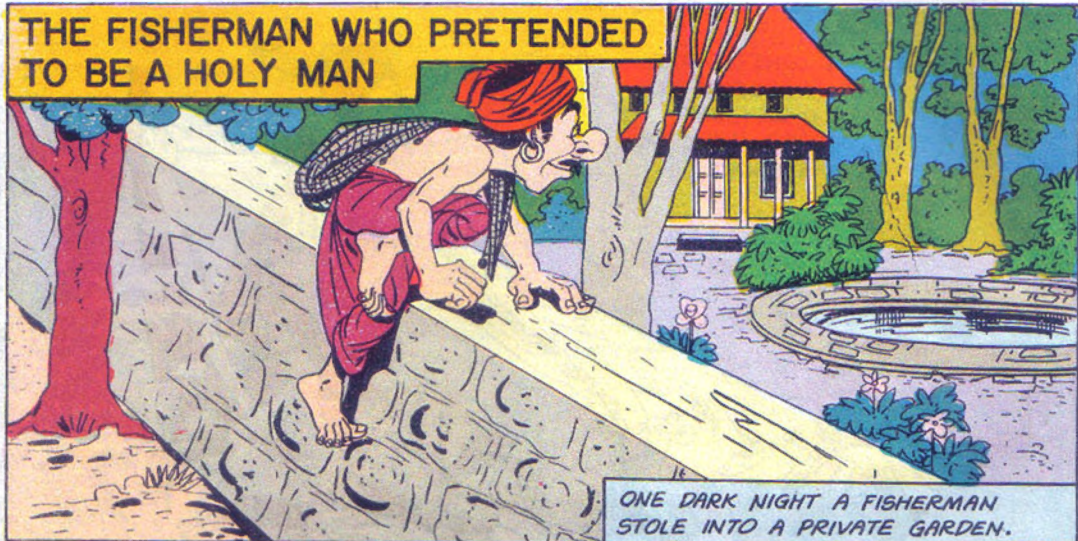

THE BOAT! IT'S ...

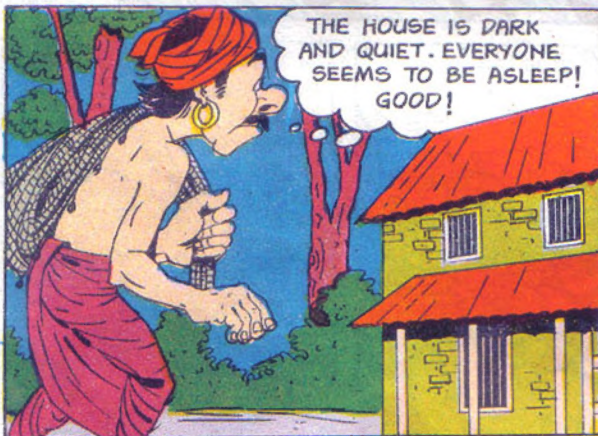
IT'S A STORM! I CAN'T CONTROL THE BOAT. IT'S GOING TO TURN OVER. JUMP OVERBOARD AND SWIM TO THE SHORE!



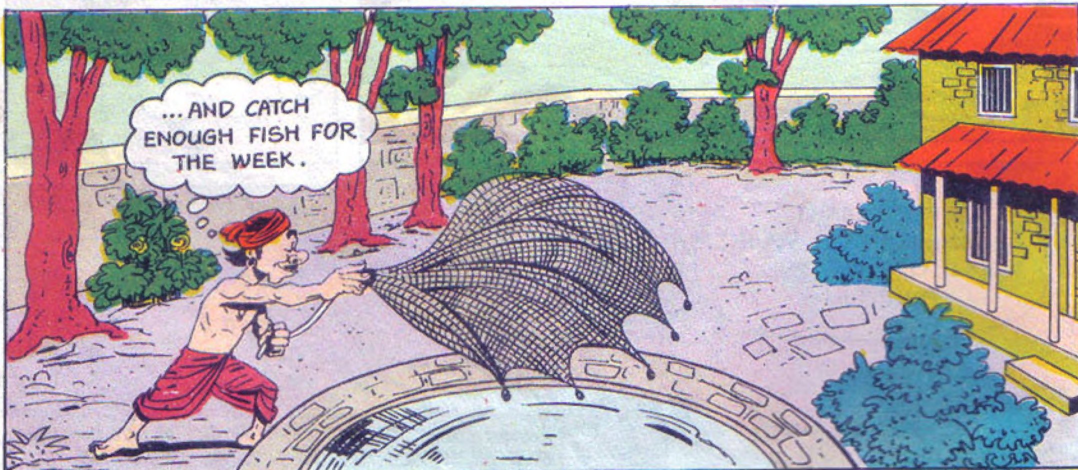




THE FISHERMAN WHO PRETENDED TO BE A HOLY MAN
ONE DARK NIGHT A FISHERMAN STOLE INTO A PRIVATE GARDEN.


THE HOUSE IS DARK AND QUIET. EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE ASLEEP! GOOD!

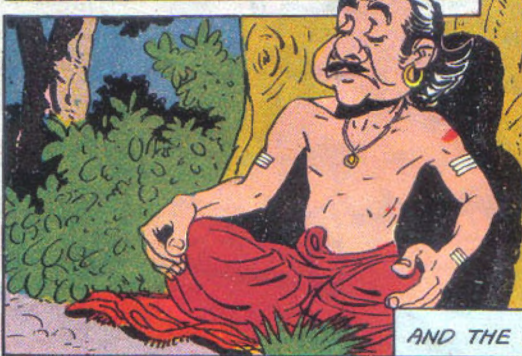

I CAN CAST MY NET RIGHT AWAY...

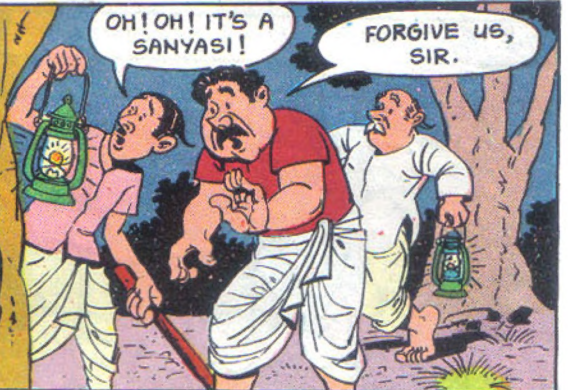

...AND CATCH ENOUGH FISH FOR THE WEEK.

BUT EVEN AS THE NET WAS CAST —
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND? DID YOU HEAR IT?
I DID. IT SOUNDED LIKE A NET FALLING INTO THE WATER.
A NET? IN THE WATER? THE POND! MY FISH! SOMEBODY'S STEALING MY FISH! THIEF! THIEF!
THE OWNER WOKE UP HIS SERVANTS.
QUICK! IT'S A THIEF! CATCH HIM!
OUTSIDE THE HOUSE —
OOO
THEY'RE AWAKE! THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY. I'M TRAPPED. WHAT SHALL I DO?

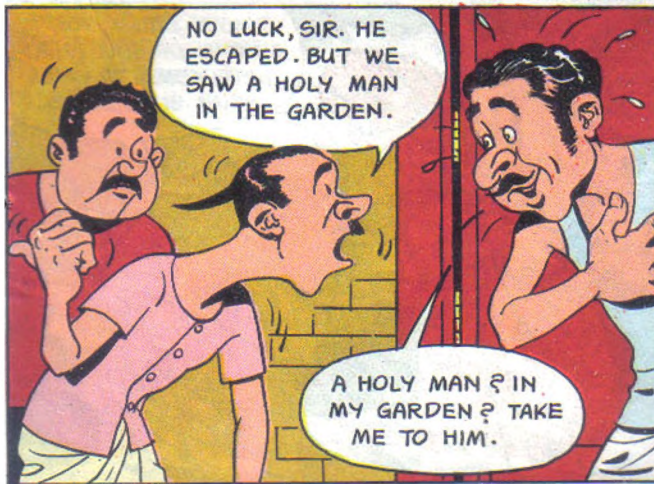

AS HE LOOKED DESPERATELY ABOUT, SOMETHING CAUGHT HIS EYE.
A SMOULDERING BONFIRE! FATE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN KINDER!

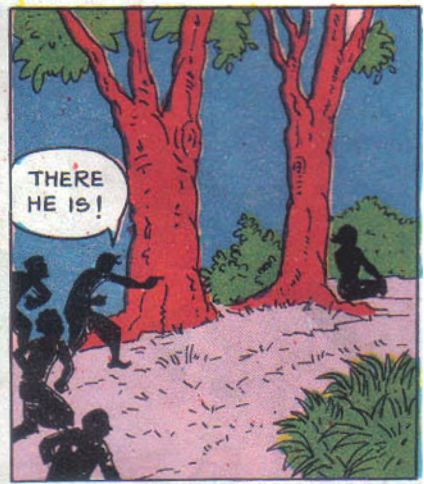

HE PULLED OFF HIS TURBAN AND SMEARED SOME ASH ON HIS ARMS AND FOREHEAD.
I HOPE THIS DISGUISE WORKS!
LOOK! CAN YOU SEE A MAN THERE?

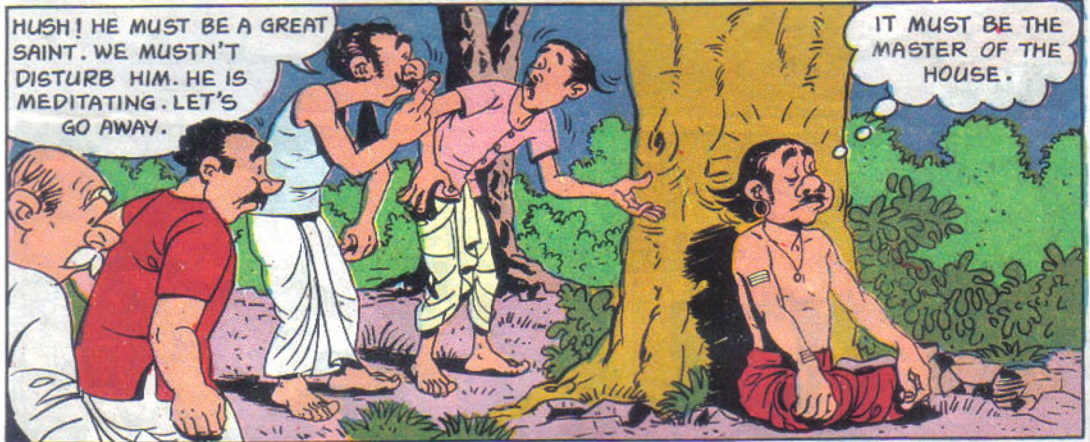



OH! OH! IT'S A SANYASI!
FORGIVE US, SIR.
AND THE SERVANTS CONTINUED THEIR SEARCH.

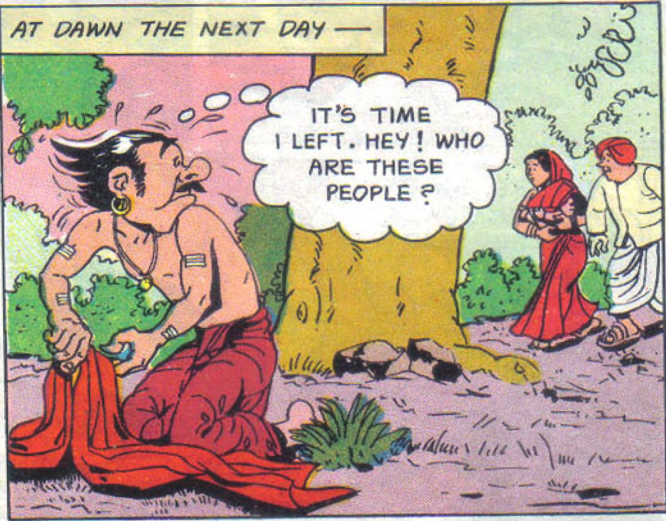

AFTER A WHILE, THEY CAME BACK TO THEIR MASTER.
WELL, WHAT HAPPENED? HAVE YOU FOUND HIM?


NO LUCK, SIR. HE ESCAPED. BUT WE SAW A HOLY MAN IN THE GARDEN.
A HOLY MAN ? IN MY GARDEN ? TAKE ME TO HIM.


THERE HE IS!


HUSH! HE MUST BE A GREAT SAINT. WE MUSTN'T DISTURB HIM. HE IS MEDITATING. LET'S GO AWAY.
IT MUST BE THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.


I'VE FOOLED EVEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE. NOW AREN'T I CLEVER!

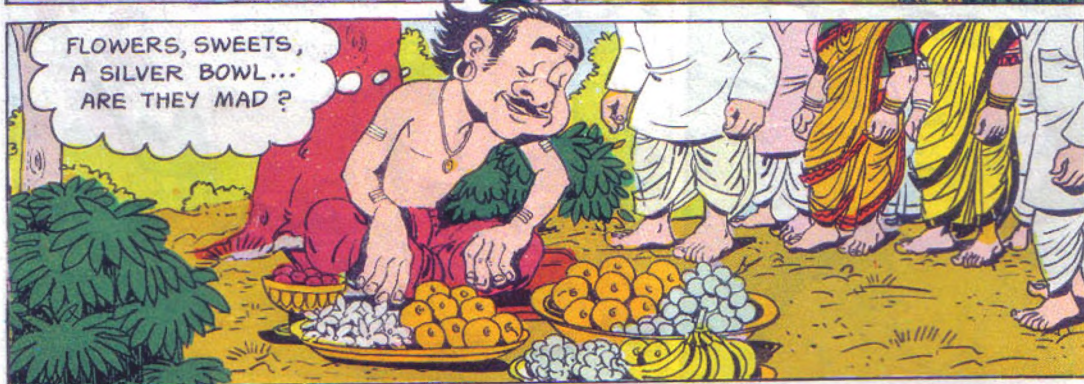

AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY —
IT'S TIME I LEFT. HEY! WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE ?

O HOLY SAINT, WE HEARD OF YOU AND HAVE COME TO SEEK YOUR BLESSINGS.

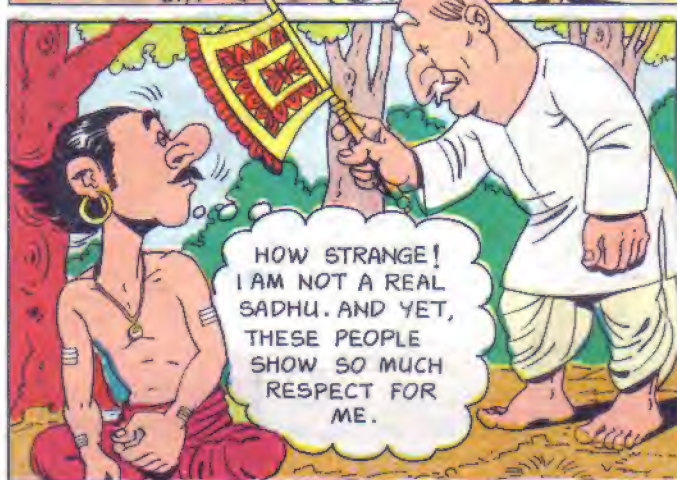


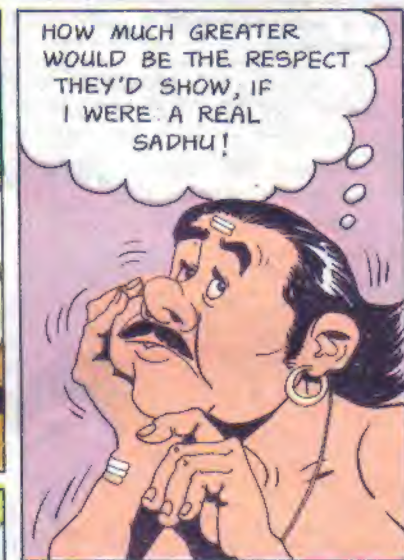






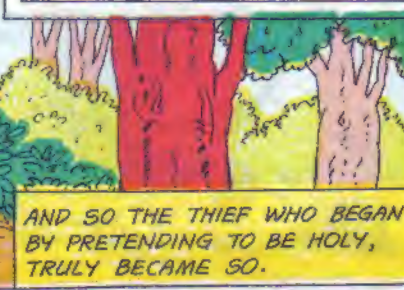
AND TO CROWN IT ALL, THE LOOK OF UTTER DEVOTION IN THEIR EYES!









# THE TRAVELLER AND THE WISH-TREE

ON A HOT SUMMER'S DAY ...





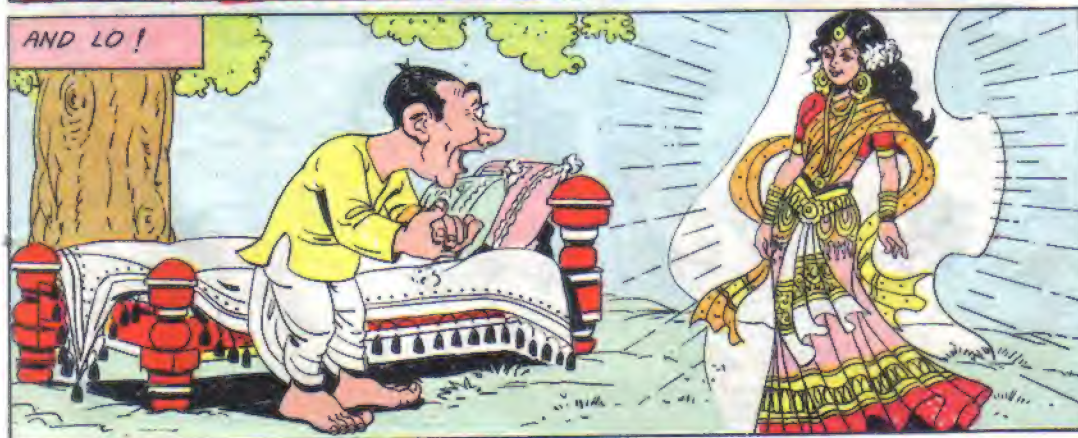

AND LO!

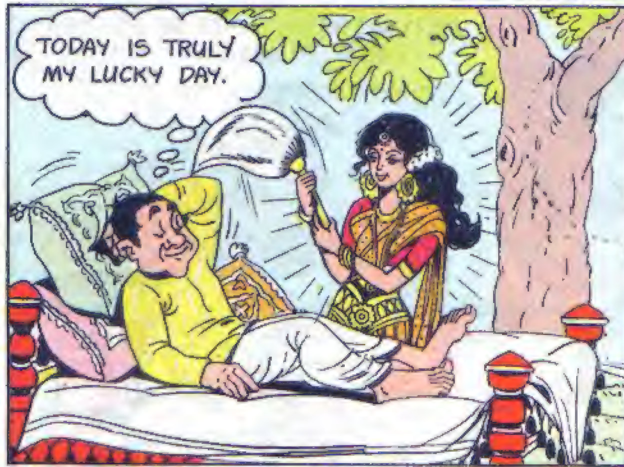
A BED! APPEARING OUT OF NOWHERE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!





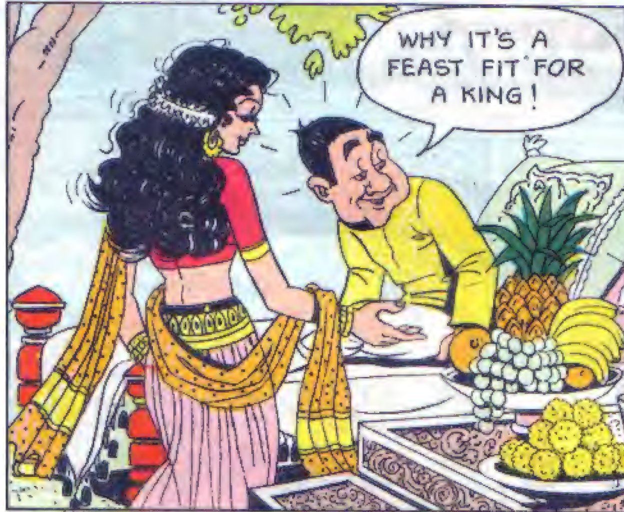






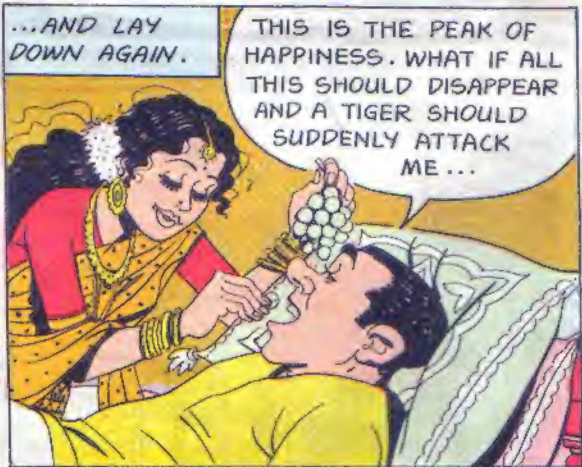

SOON —

I COULDN'T HAVE HAD A LOVELIER COMPANION! BUT MY STOMACH IS GROWLING. I AM HUNGRY. IF ONLY I HAD SOME GOOD FOOD TO EAT!









EE-A-AH!


THE TRAVELLER CLAMBERED UP THE TREE.


HAD I BEEN CONTENT WITH JUST THE SHADE OF THE TREE, I WOULD NOT BE AT THE MERCY OF THIS FEROCIOUS TIGER!

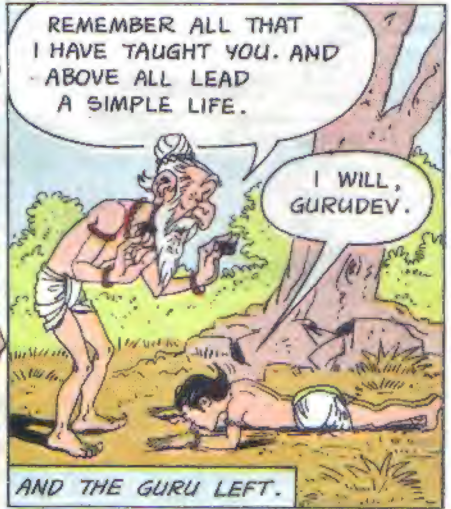
# THE ASCETIC AND HIS LOIN-CLOTH



IN A FOREST NEAR A VILLAGE THERE LIVED A GURU AND HIS DISCIPLE WHO SPENT ALL THEIR TIME IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

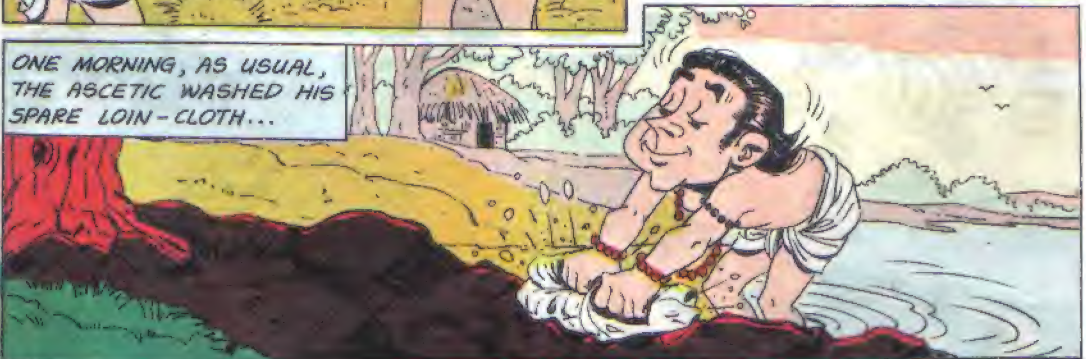
THEN ONE DAY —



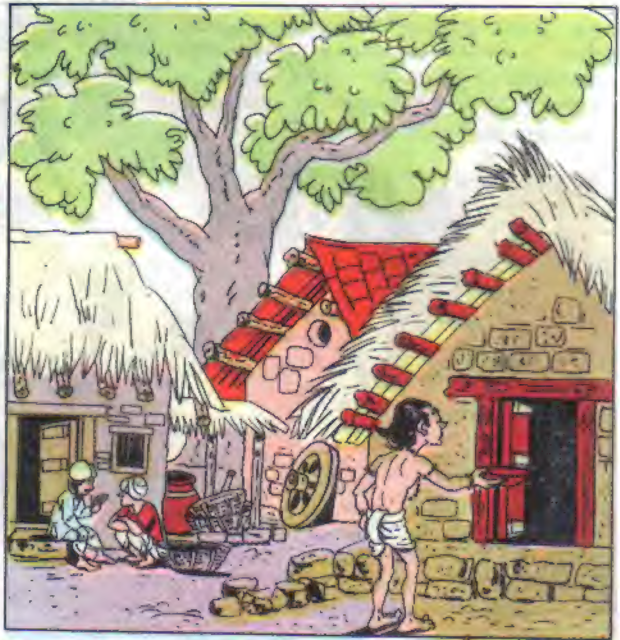




AND THE GURU LEFT.

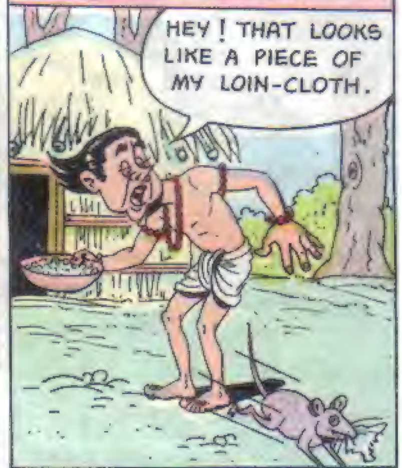
ONE MORNING, AS USUAL, THE ASCETIC WASHED HIS SPARE LOIN-CLOTH...

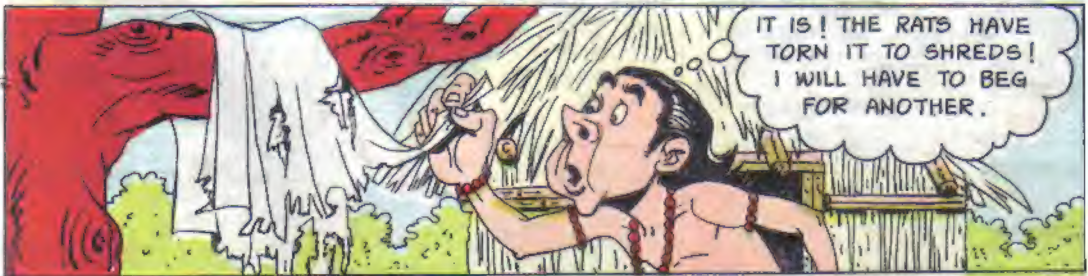



...AND HUNG IT OUT TO DRY.
I WILL NOW GO TO THE VILLAGE TO BEG FOR ALMS.




MAY GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.


LATER, WHEN THE ASCETIC RETURNED TO HIS HUT —
HEY ! THAT LOOKS LIKE A PIECE OF MY LOIN-CLOTH.


IT IS ! THE RATS HAVE TORN IT TO SHREDS ! I WILL HAVE TO BEG FOR ANOTHER.

THE NEXT DAY AT THE VILLAGE —

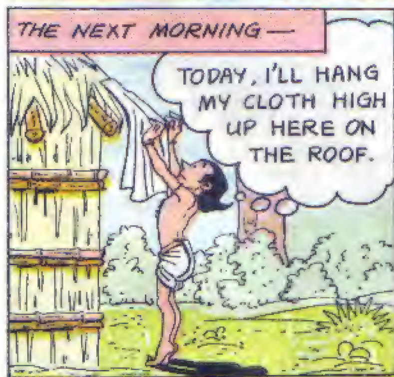
MOTHER, I NEED A LOIN-CLOTH. CAN YOU SPARE ME ONE?

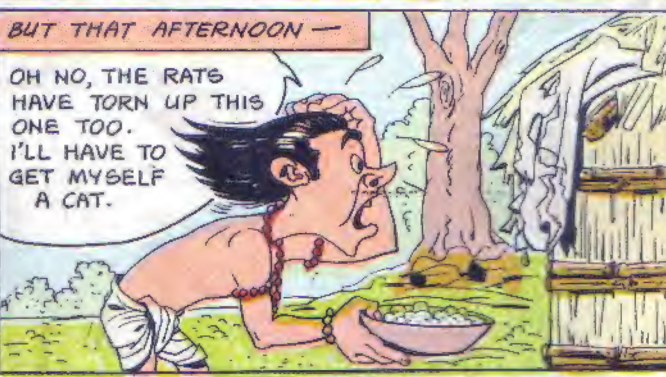
A LOIN-CLOTH?

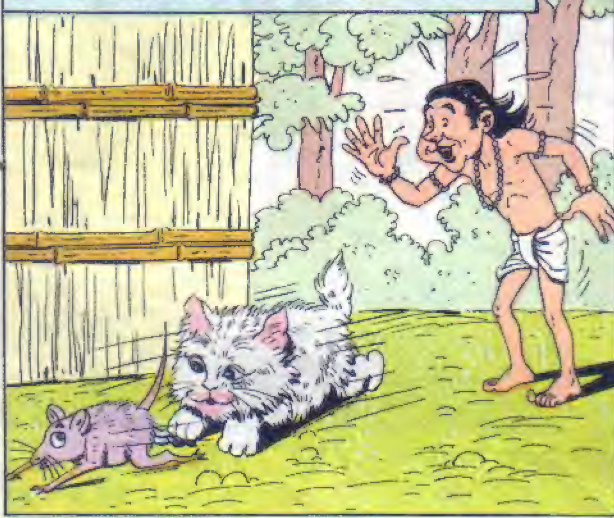




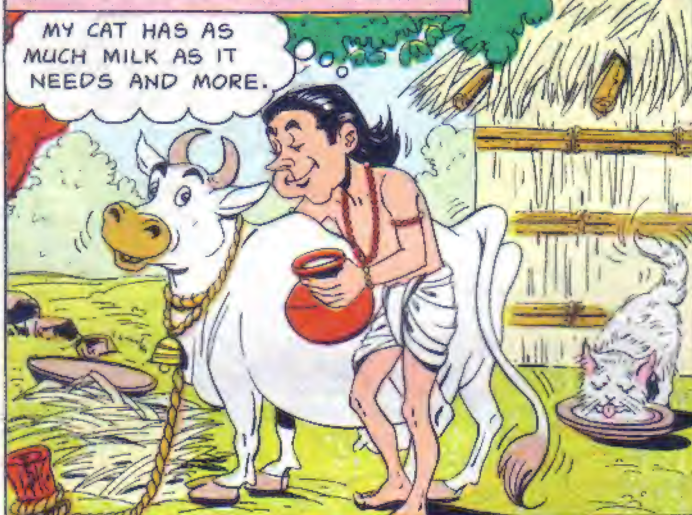




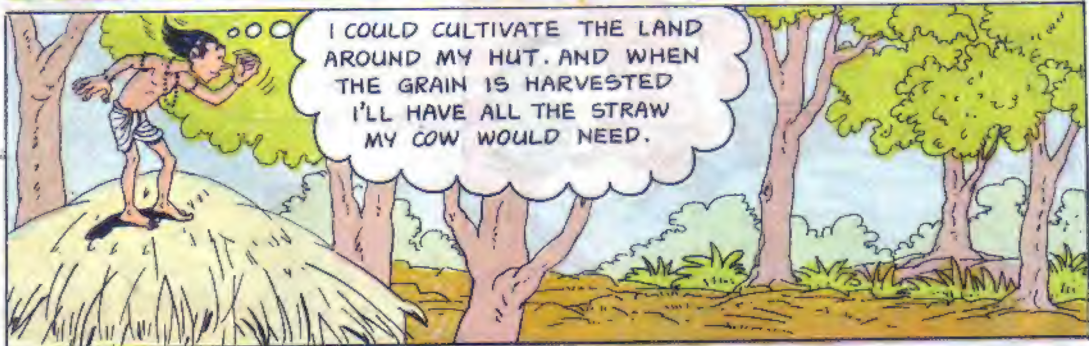



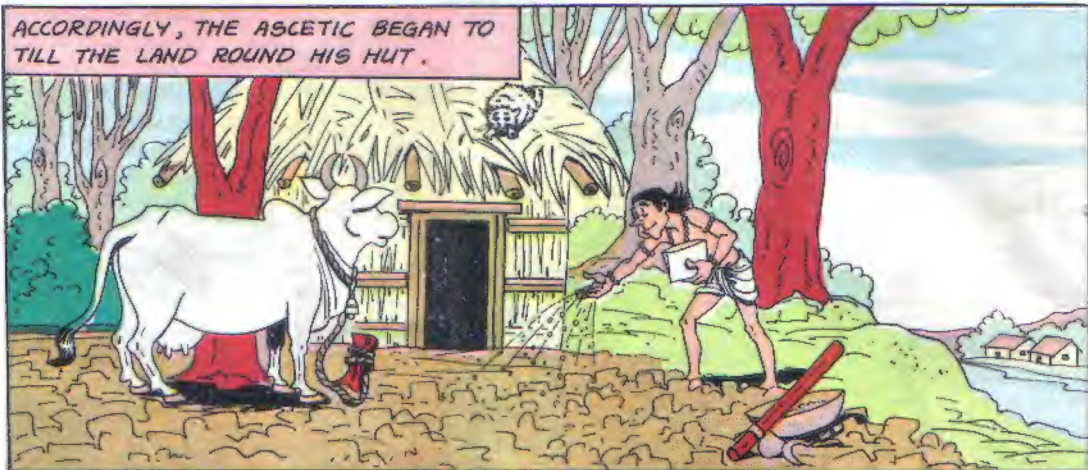

SO THE ASCETIC GOT HIMSELF A CAT...

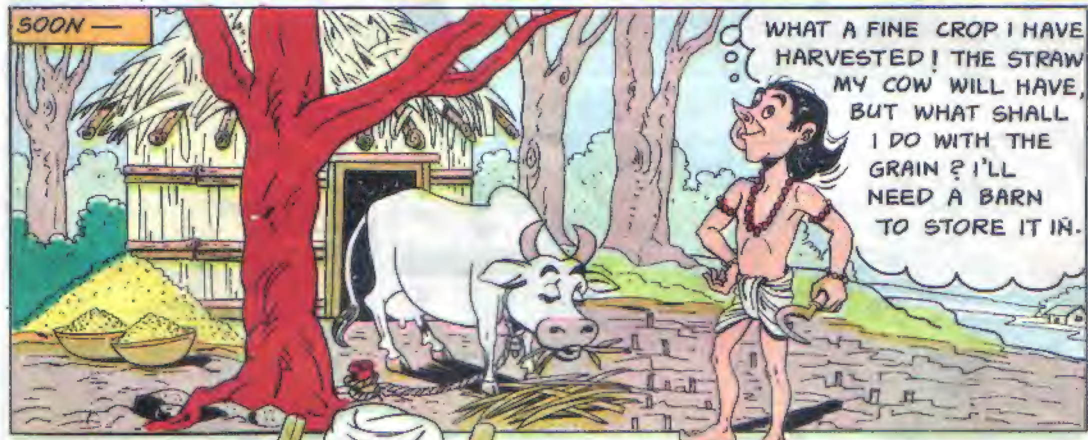

...AND SOON, THE RATS STOPPED TROUBLING HIM.
I MUST KEEP MY CAT WELL FED. I KNOW WHAT. I'LL GET MYSELF A COW.

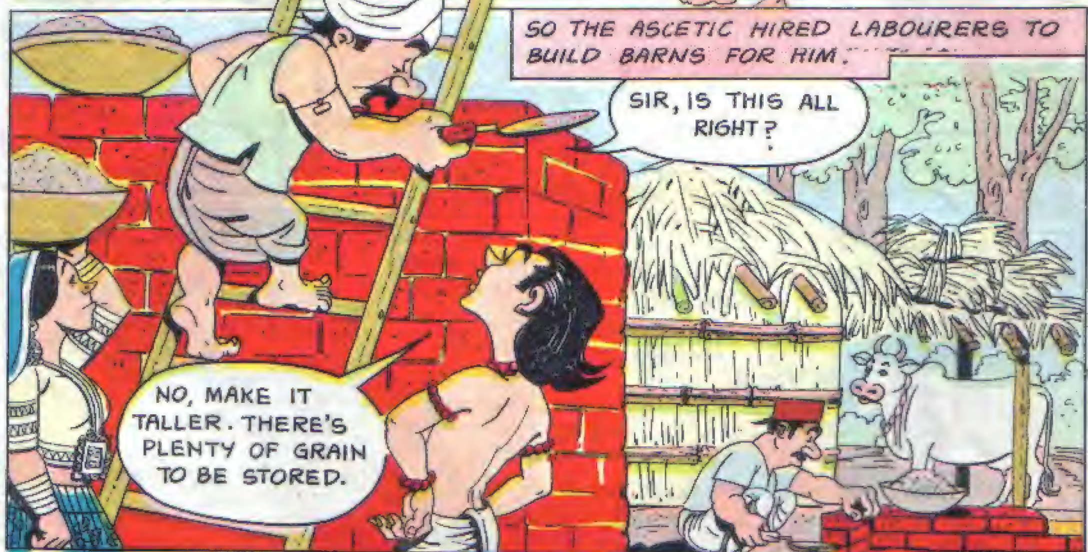

AND SO HE GOT HIMSELF A COW.
MY CAT HAS AS MUCH MILK AS IT NEEDS AND MORE.

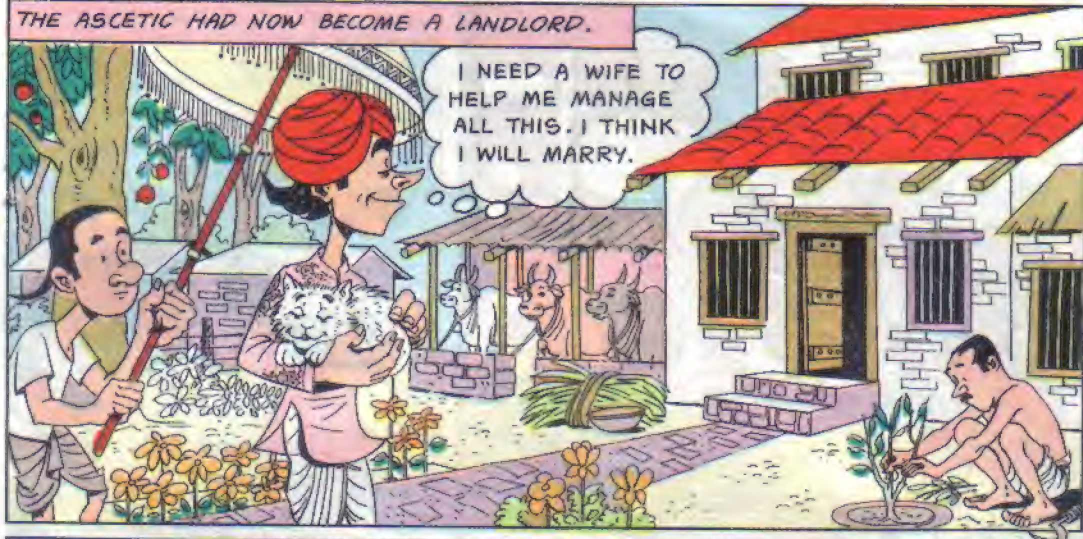

BUT I NEED STRAW TO FEED MY COW. HOW SHALL I GO ABOUT GETTING THAT?

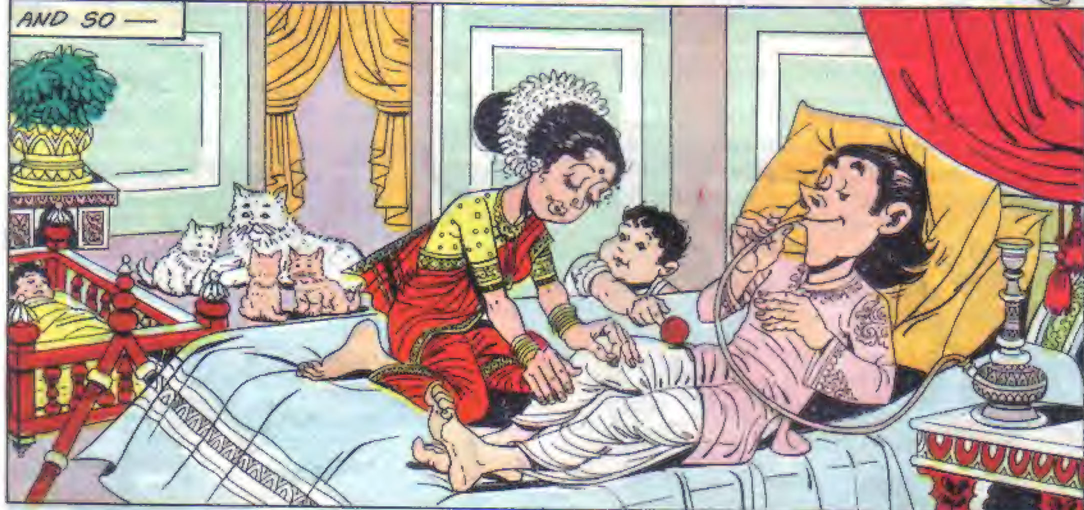

I COULD CULTIVATE THE LAND AROUND MY HUT. AND WHEN THE GRAIN IS HARVESTED I'LL HAVE ALL THE STRAW MY COW WOULD NEED.

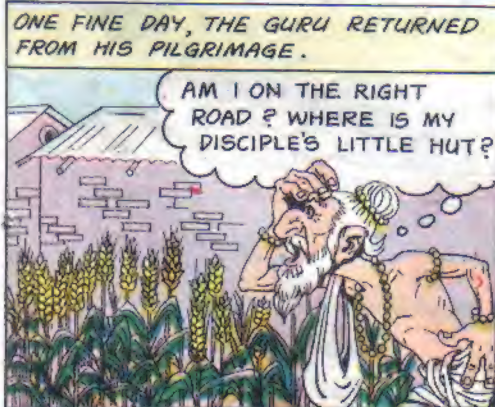

ACCORDINGLY, THE ASCETIC BEGAN TO TILL THE LAND ROUND HIS HUT.

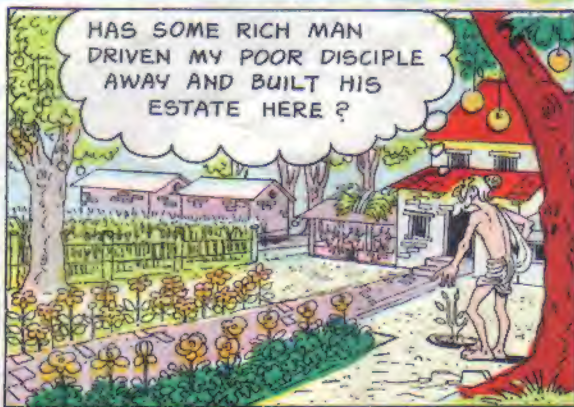

SOON —
WHAT A FINE CROP I HAVE HARVESTED! THE STRAW MY COW WILL HAVE, BUT WHAT SHALL I DO WITH THE GRAIN? I'LL NEED A BARN TO STORE IT IN.


SO THE ASCETIC HIRED LABOURERS TO BUILD BARNS FOR HIM.
SIR, IS THIS ALL RIGHT?
NO, MAKE IT TALLER. THERE'S PLENTY OF GRAIN TO BE STORED.


THE ASCETIC HAD NOW BECOME A LANDLORD.
I NEED A WIFE TO HELP ME MANAGE ALL THIS. I THINK I WILL MARRY.

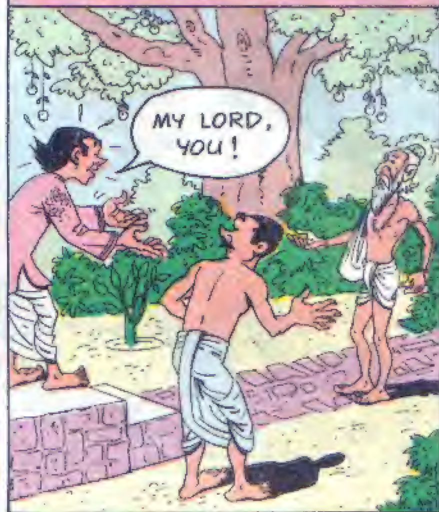

AND SO —


ONE FINE DAY, THE GURU RETURNED FROM HIS PILGRIMAGE.
AM I ON THE RIGHT ROAD ? WHERE IS MY DISCIPLE'S LITTLE HUT?


HAS SOME RICH MAN DRIVEN MY POOR DISCIPLE AWAY AND BUILT HIS ESTATE HERE ?

WHEN A SERVANT CAME OUT OF THE HOUSE, THE GURU WENT UP TO HIM.




HE RUSHED FORWARD AND FELL AT HIS GURU'S FEET.

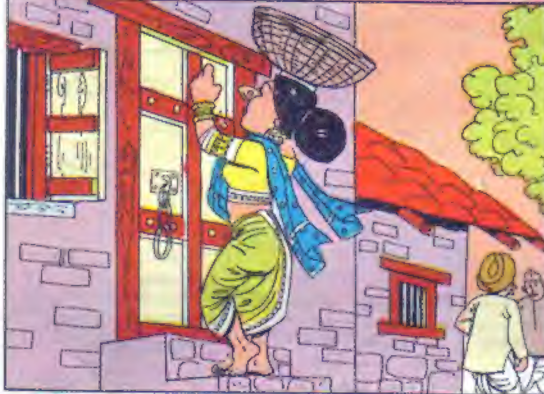
MY SON, WHAT IS ALL THIS? I LEFT YOU LEADING THE SIMPLE LIFE OF AN ASCETIC. I RETURN TO FIND YOU SURROUNDED BY WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

OH GURUDEV, IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SINGLE LOIN-CLOTH. TO PROTECT IT FROM THE RATS I NEEDED A CAT AND THEN THERE WAS NO END TO MY NEEDS. FORGIVE ME, GURUDEV.

# TO EACH HIS OWN

ONE EVENING, AFTER A LONG DAY AT THE MARKET, A FISHWIFE FINALLY SOLD HER LAST FISH.

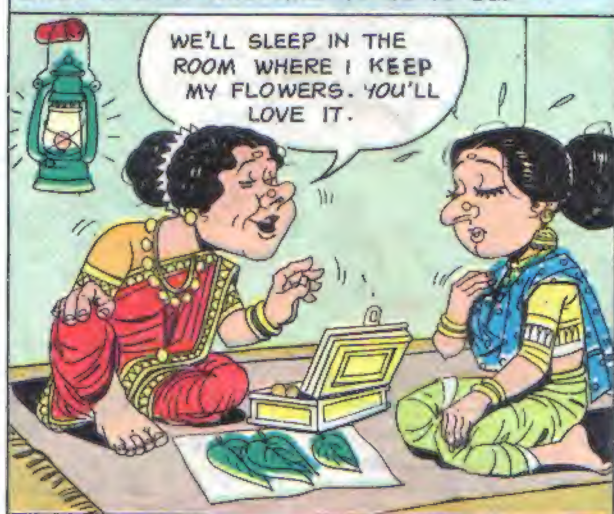
ON HER WAY HOME, SHE STOPPED AT HER FRIEND'S HOUSE AND KNOCKED.



HER FRIEND, WHO WAS A FLOWER-GIRL, ANSWERED THE DOOR.

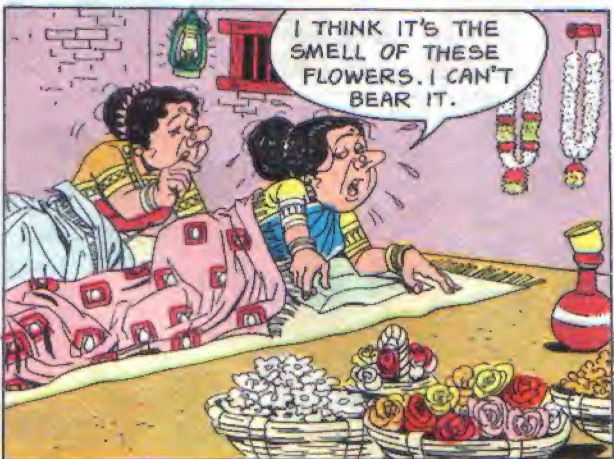




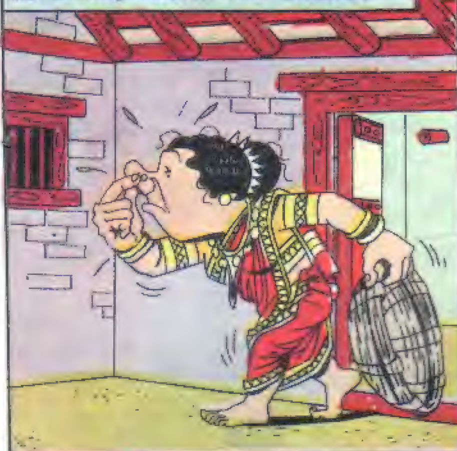


LATER WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GO TO BED —
WE'LL SLEEP IN THE ROOM WHERE I KEEP MY FLOWERS. YOU'LL LOVE IT.


OH! IT'S A BEAUTIFUL ROOM.

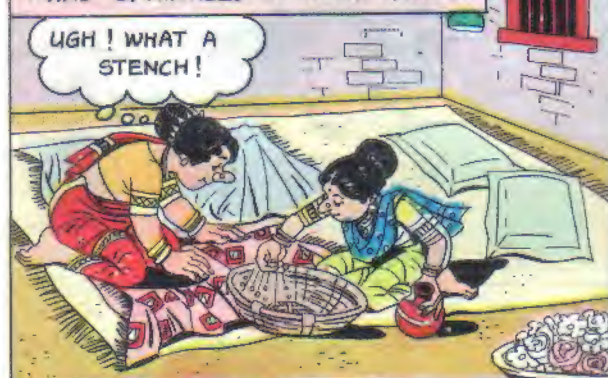

LATER —
WHY ARE YOU SO RESTLESS? WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I JUST CAN'T SLEEP.


I THINK IT'S THE SMELL OF THESE FLOWERS. I CAN'T BEAR IT.

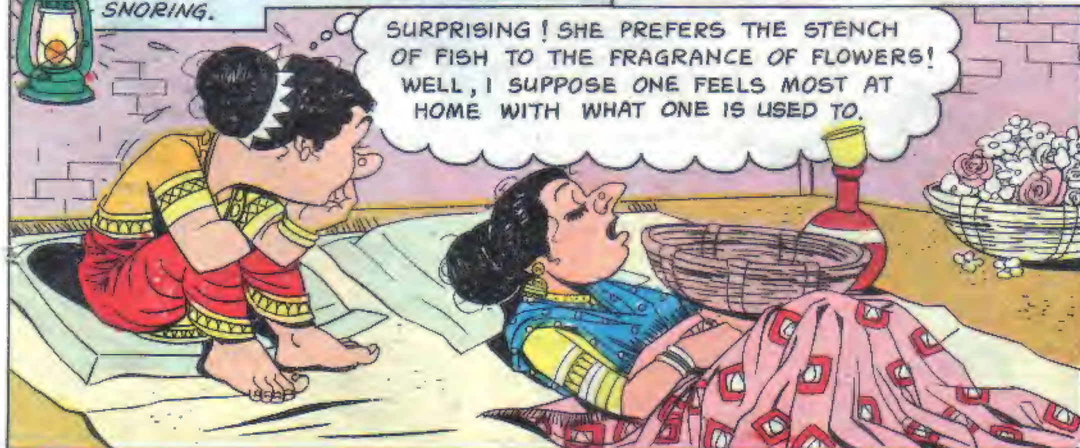

I KNOW WHAT! MAY I HAVE MY FISH-BASKET?
CERTAINLY! I'LL BRING IT IN FOR YOU.


THE FRIEND WENT OUT AND RETURNED WITH THE BASKET.

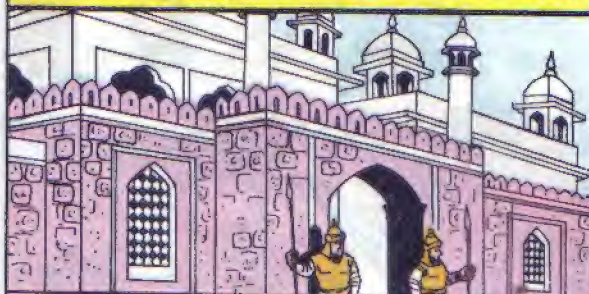

THE FISHWIFE TOOK IT...


...AND SPRINKLED IT WITH WATER.
UGH ! WHAT A STENCH !


AH ! THIS IS MUCH BETTER. NOW I SHALL SLEEP LIKE A LOG.


AND, RIGHT ENOUGH, WITHIN A FEW MINUTES, SHE WAS FAST ASLEEP AND SNORING.
SURPRISING ! SHE PREFERS THE STENCH OF FISH TO THE FRAGRANCE OF FLOWERS! WELL, I SUPPOSE ONE FEELS MOST AT HOME WITH WHAT ONE IS USED TO.

# THE HERMIT AND THE NAWAB



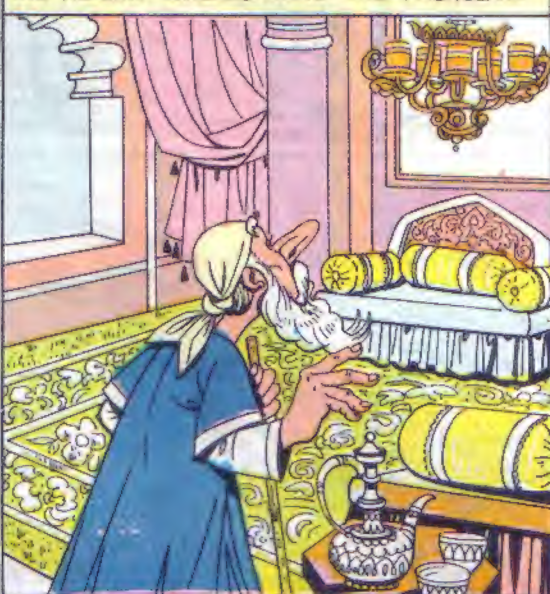














THE NAWAB ENDED HIS PRAYERS WITH THE USUAL REQUEST FOR PROSPERITY.
O LORD, I SALUTE YOU WITH DEVOTION. GIVE ME MONEY, GIVE ME RICHES, GIVE ME FAME AND FORTUNE...

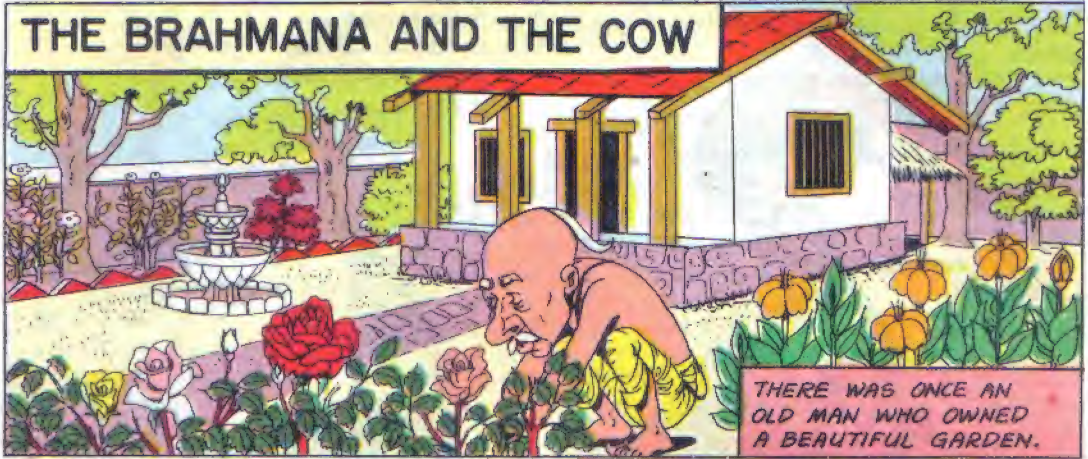

OH! OH! I'VE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE!

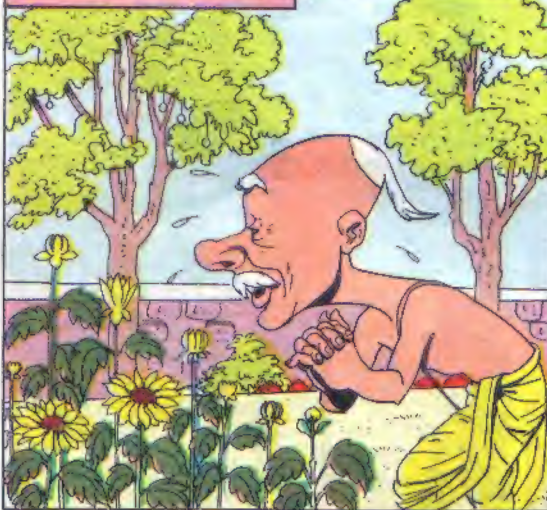

AS HE TURNED TO WALK AWAY, THE NAWAB SAW HIM.
WAIT, MY GOOD MAN! YOU CAME TO SEE ME. WHY ARE YOU GOING AWAY WITHOUT EVEN SPEAKING TO ME?

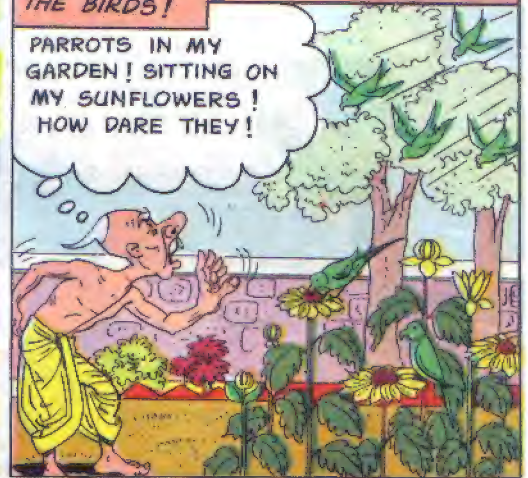

I CAME TO ASK YOU FOR MONEY, BUT WHEN I HEARD YOU BEGGING FOR MONEY AND RICHES FROM GOD, I CHANGED MY MIND.

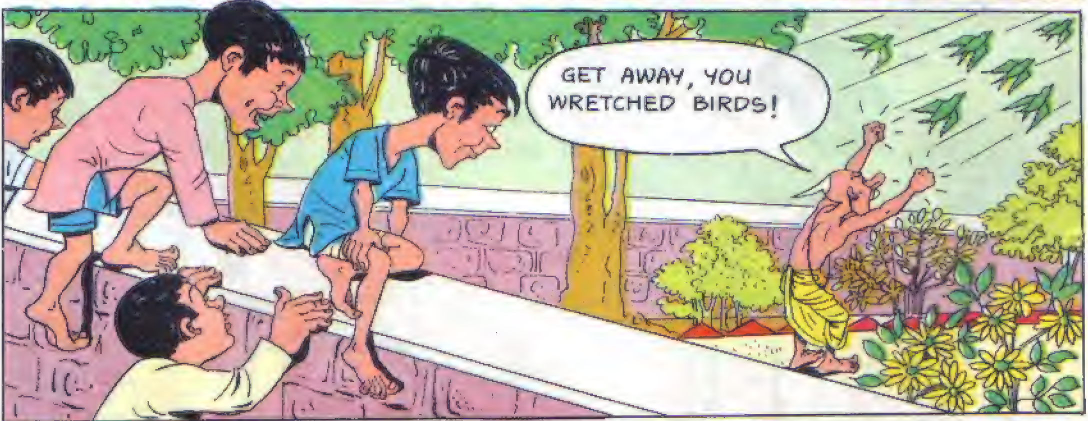

WHY SHOULD I BEG FROM ONE WHO IS HIMSELF A BEGGAR? IF I MUST BEG, LET ME BEG FROM GOD.

# THE BRAHMANA AND THE COW



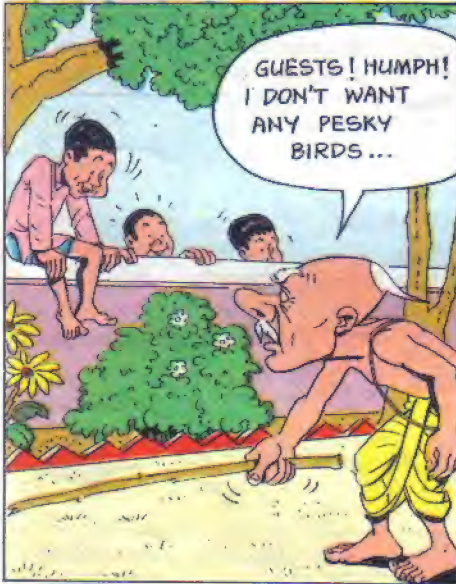



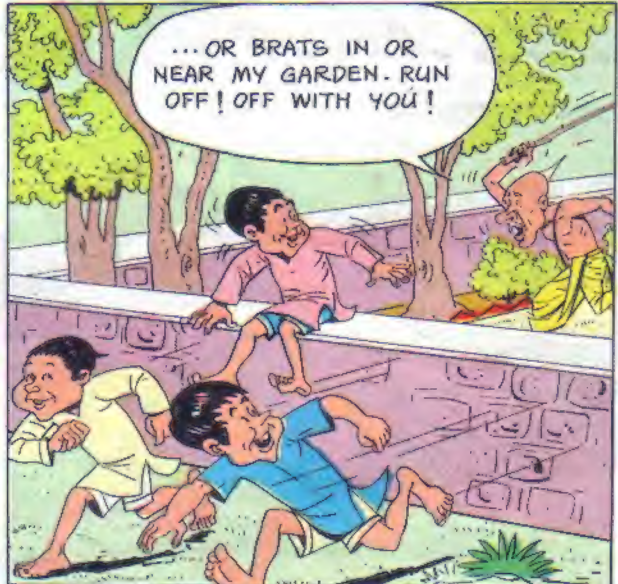



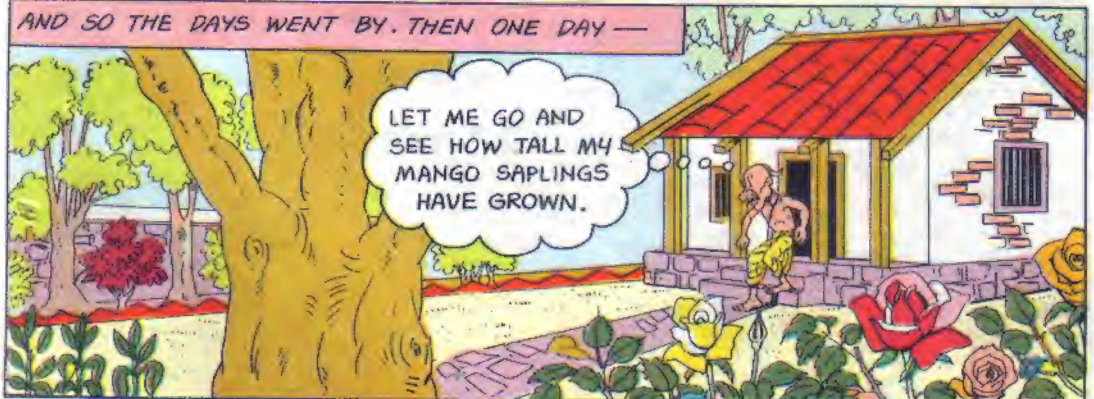
THE MISCHIEVOUS BOYS OF THE VILLAGE LIKED TO TEASE THE OLD MAN.

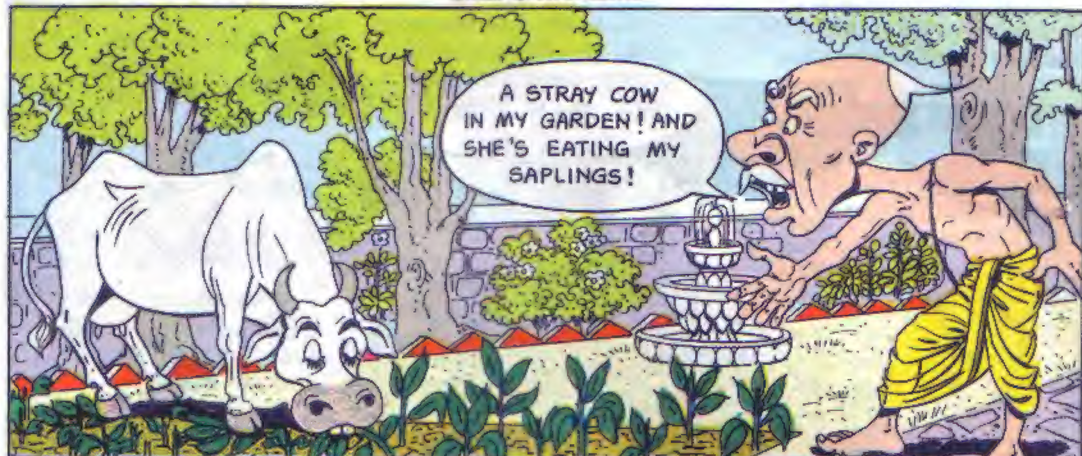
BE A SPORT, SIR. PARROTS LOVE TO EAT SUNFLOWER SEEDS. WHY DID YOU SHOO THEM AWAY?

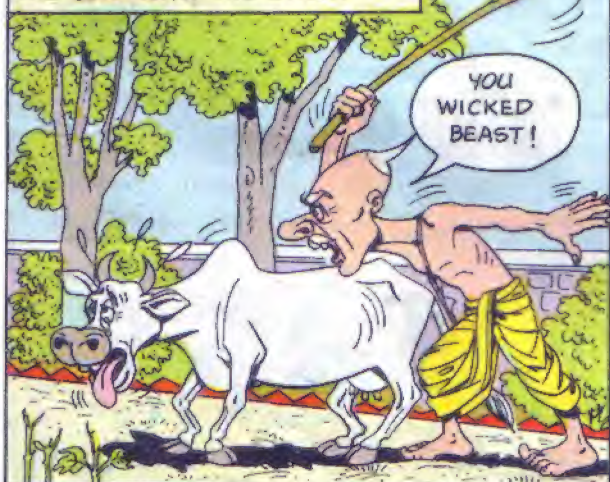
BESIDES, YOU ARE A BRAHMANA, SIR. YOU MUST NOT BE RUDE TO YOUR GUESTS.

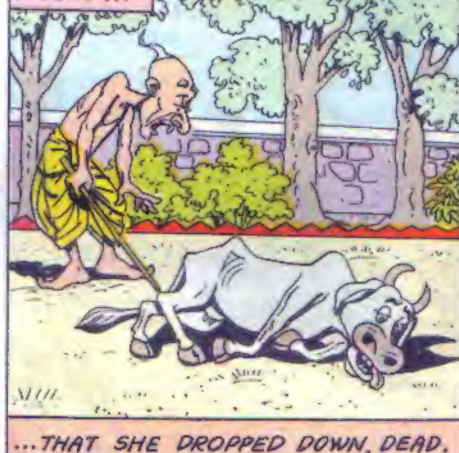


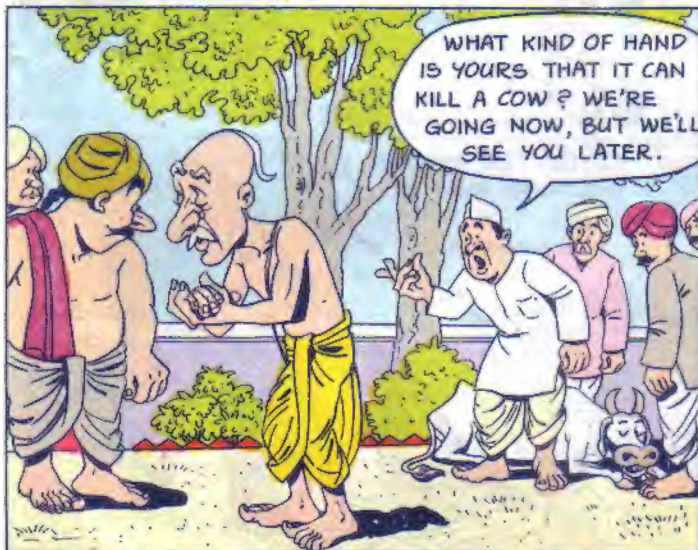

A STRAY COW IN MY GARDEN! AND SHE'S EATING MY SAPLINGS!

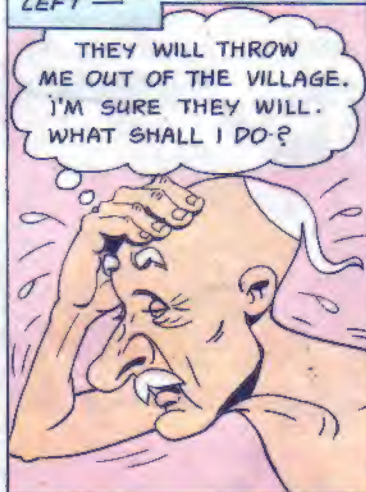

IN A FIT OF RAGE, THE BRAHMANA BEGAN TO BEAT THE COW WITH HIS STICK.
YOU WICKED BEAST!

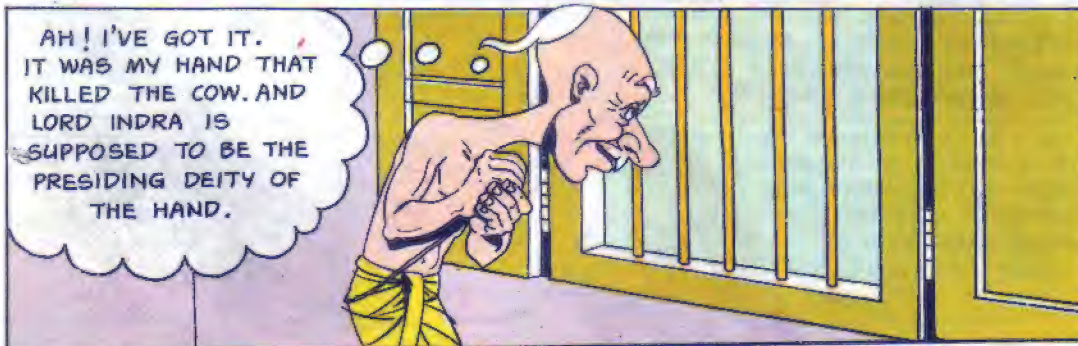

THE COW WAS ALREADY OLD, THIN AND HUNGRY. THE BRAHMANA'S BEATING GAVE HER SUCH A BAD FRIGHT...
...THAT SHE DROPPED DOWN, DEAD.

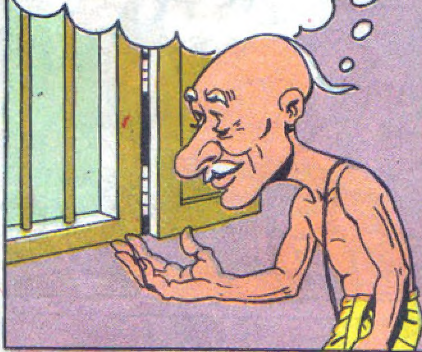

O GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE? I'VE KILLED A COW.

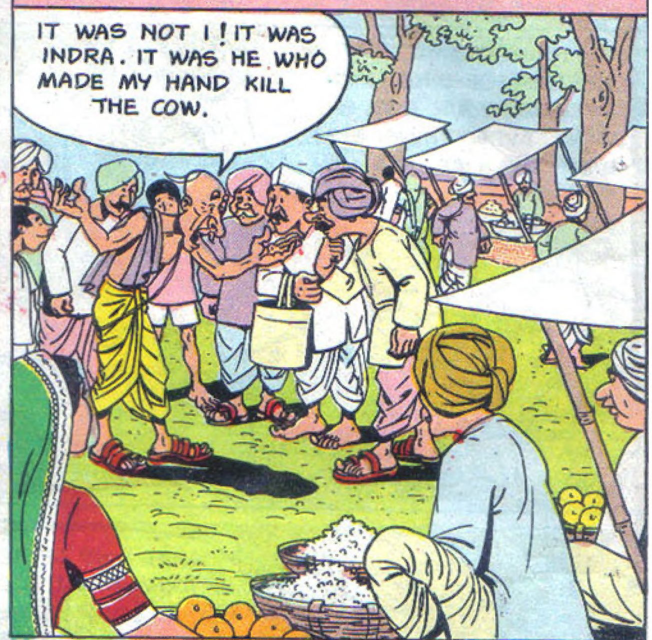

THE BRAHMANA HAD TO FACE THE VILLAGERS WHO HAD COME TO KNOW OF WHAT HE HAD DONE.
YOU HAVE COMMITTED THE GREATEST OF SINS ! YOU HAVE PUT YOUR GARDEN ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE, EVEN THE LIFE OF A COW.
THE COW GIVES US HER SWEET AND NOURISHING MILK. AND IN RETURN YOU KILL HER ?

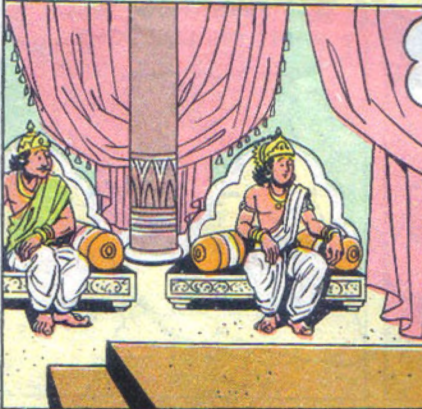

WHAT KIND OF HAND IS YOURS THAT IT CAN KILL A COW ? WE'RE GOING NOW, BUT WE'LL SEE YOU LATER.


WHEN THE VILLAGERS LEFT —
THEY WILL THROW ME OUT OF THE VILLAGE. I'M SURE THEY WILL. WHAT SHALL I DO ?

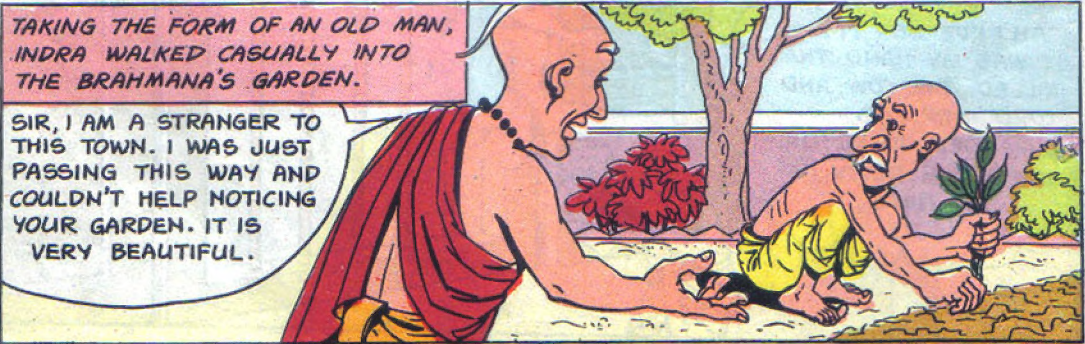

AH ! I'VE GOT IT. IT WAS MY HAND THAT KILLED THE COW. AND LORD INDRA IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE PRESIDING DEITY OF THE HAND.

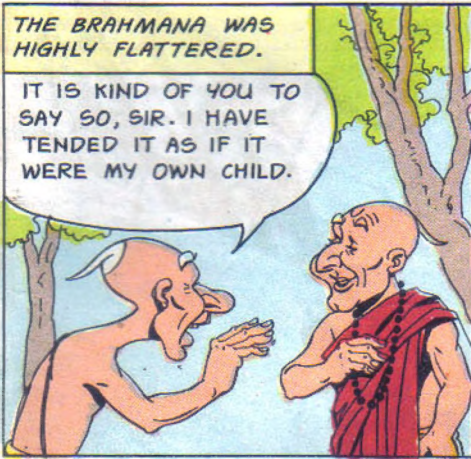

IF IT IS INDRA WHO GUIDES THE HAND, IT IS NOT I WHO KILLED THE COW, BUT HE! HE IS TO BLAME! YES, I'LL TELL THE VILLAGERS THAT.

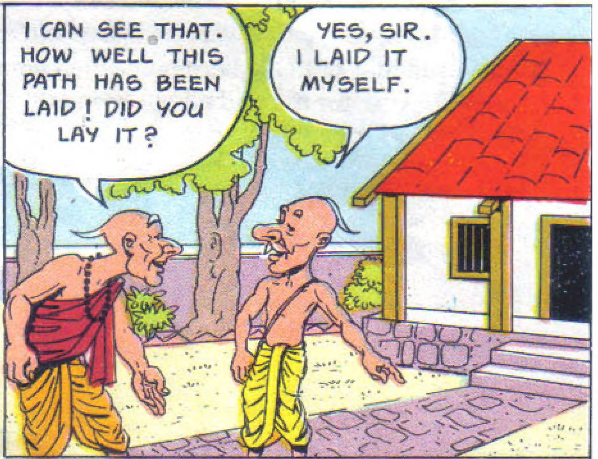

SO THE NEXT DAY, AT THE VILLAGE MARKET —
IT WAS NOT I! IT WAS INDRA. IT WAS HE WHO MADE MY HAND KILL THE COW.

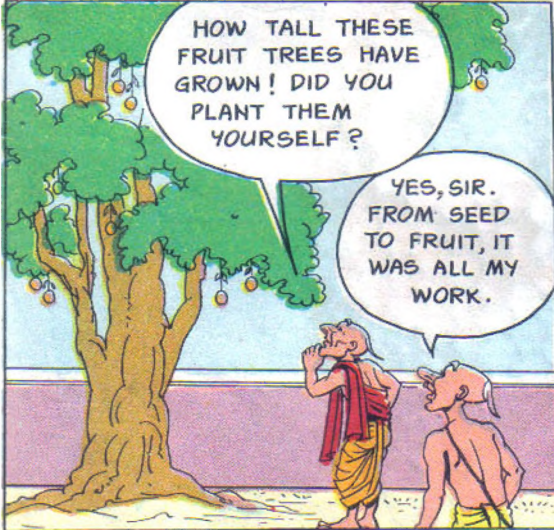

THIS NEWS SPREAD LIKE WILD-FIRE, TILL IT REACHED THE EARS OF INDRA HIMSELF.

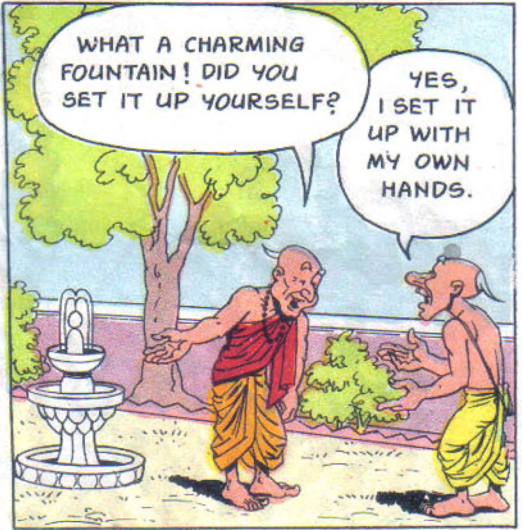

I'D BETTER ASSUME A DISGUISE AND GO AND SEE THIS BRAHMANA.

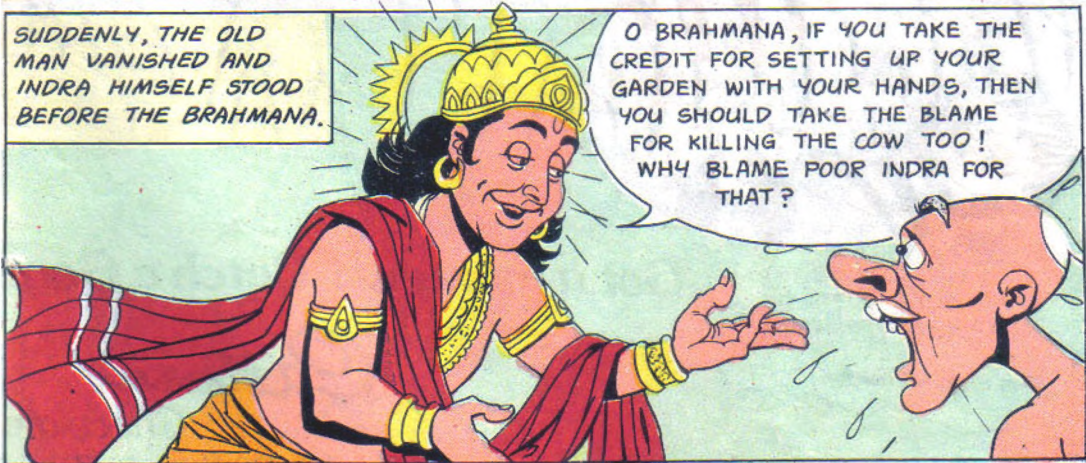

TAKING THE FORM OF AN OLD MAN, INDRA WALKED CASUALLY INTO THE BRAHMANA'S GARDEN.
SIR, I AM A STRANGER TO THIS TOWN. I WAS JUST PASSING THIS WAY AND COULDN'T HELP NOTICING YOUR GARDEN. IT IS VERY BEAUTIFUL.


THE BRAHMANA WAS HIGHLY FLATTERED.
IT IS KIND OF YOU TO SAY SO, SIR. I HAVE TENDED IT AS IF IT WERE MY OWN CHILD.


I CAN SEE THAT. HOW WELL THIS PATH HAS BEEN LAID! DID YOU LAY IT?
YES, SIR. I LAID IT MYSELF.


HOW TALL THESE FRUIT TREES HAVE GROWN! DID YOU PLANT THEM YOURSELF?
YES, SIR. FROM SEED TO FRUIT, IT WAS ALL MY WORK.


WHAT A CHARMING FOUNTAIN! DID YOU SET IT UP YOURSELF?
YES, I SET IT UP WITH MY OWN HANDS.


SUDDENLY, THE OLD MAN VANISHED AND INDRA HIMSELF STOOD BEFORE THE BRAHMANA.
O BRAHMANA, IF YOU TAKE THE CREDIT FOR SETTING UP YOUR GARDEN WITH YOUR HANDS, THEN YOU SHOULD TAKE THE BLAME FOR KILLING THE COW TOO! WHY BLAME POOR INDRA FOR THAT?



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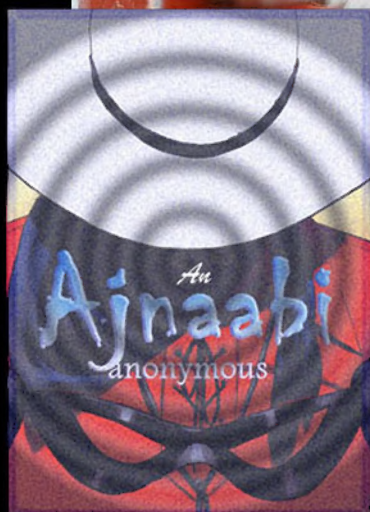
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